

# *The Need for Trans-Culture Spirituality Education*

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June 12 2009



# Happiness is Common Goal Regardless of Cultural Backgrounds

- The Pursuit of Happiness is explicitly stated in the US Declaration of Independence.
- US is one of the most attractive destinations of immigrants all over the world regardless of ethnicity.



# Determinants of Happiness

- Utility is a function of physical goods and mental goods.
- Money can buy physical goods, but mental goods like Self Esteem, Freedom from Anxiety, Self Acceptance, Acceptance by Others, Inner Peace (no inner conflicts) cannot be purchased.
- Paradox of choice: confusion is a mental bad! So is insecurity, fear, and lack of the above.



# Too little emphasis on mental goods and bads by economists

- Excessive emphasis on materialism uses up a lot of resources but does not necessarily enhance happiness;
- Bhutan's GNH reminds us that happiness is the final goal, though the concept of GNH may still be difficult to operationalize





- 調查自2005年首次推出今年為第4次  
Launched in 2005, this year is the 4<sup>th</sup> time for the study
- 今年調查於2008年10月20日至24日期間進行  
The survey was conducted between 20 – 24 Oct
- 以隨機抽樣電話調查方式進行  
The survey was conducted via randomized phone calls
- 成功訪問了823位年齡21歲以上的香港居民  
823 Hong Kong residents aged 21 or above were  
successfully interviewed

# Lingnan Happiness Studies: the Happiness Formula

**Table 6: Regression Analysis of the Happiness Formula**

Dependent Variable: Happiness Index (Scale of 0 to 10)

Independent Variable	Coefficient	t statistic
Constant	1.491	4.100***
<b>Love (0-10)</b>	0.146	2.696***
<b>Insight (0-10)</b>	0.174	3.685***
<b>Fortitude(0-10)</b>	0.087	1.930*
<b>Engagement(0-10)</b>	0.368	8.931***
Housewife (1 or 0)	0.300	1.497
Unemployed (1 or 0)	-0.343	-0.753
Financial stress (1 or 0)	-0.778	-4.069***
Female (1 or 0)	0.039	0.276
Married (1 or 0)	0.294	1.918*
Retiree (1 or 0)	0.149	0.517
<9,999 Household Income	-0.178	-0.849
40,000+ Household Income	-0.088	-0.593

\* & \*\*\* indicate statistical significance at 10% & 1% respectively.

# LIFE: is the formula for happiness taught by many religions

- Reverence for Life: thou shalt not kill; love thy neighbor as thyself (same in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Daoism, and Buddhism)
- Wisdom: (the middle way or sense of balance, Buddhism; you reap what you sow, Christianity and Buddhism; do not crave, Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Islam; Love God; Obey the Natural Law; Be Truthful)

- Fortitude: (Hope and Faith, Christianity; Endurance, Buddhism; Perseverance, Daoism)
- Engagement: (Charity, Buddhism and Christianity; Work hard, Zen Buddhists, Christianity—Jesus' parable about fishing)





# What is in the label?

- Different religions carry different labels, but labels are not really important. Substance is on the other hand really important.

道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。

無名天地之始;有名萬物之母。

故常無，欲以觀其妙;常有，欲以觀其徼。

此兩者同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，眾妙之門。

Ways that can be spelled out.

Cannot be the eternal way.<sup>4</sup>

Names that can be named

Must change with time and place.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Life Goals and Happiness: Regression Analysis 2006 and 2007  
(Happiness Index Based on 0-10 Scale)**

**Year 2006**

<b>Explanatory Variables (life goals):</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>t statistic</b>
Constant	43.36	15.58***
Enjoying Time with the Family	1.279	4.35***
Making Money	-0.518	-1.87*
Career Achievement	0.035	0.13
Inner Peace	0.443	1.71*
Satisfied with one's financial situation(control)	2.782	11.32***

Note: the explanatory variables are each rated on a [0, 10] scale.

**Year 2007**

<b>Explanatory Variables (life goals):</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>t statistic</b>
Constant	26.68	8.27***
Enjoying Time with the Family	0.691	2.012**
Making Money	0.434	1.325
Career Achievement	0.321	1.01
Inner Peace	0.332	1.104
Satisfied with one's financial situation(control)	4.39	14.14***

\* & \*\*\* indicate 10% & 1% statistical significance.

# But fleeting gains are not reliable.

Indeed in the 2008 Survey, which was conducted after the breakout of the financial tsunami, it is found that over 12% of the respondents with monthly incomes at or over \$40,000 described themselves as unhappy. This is likely to be associated with

**Table 8: Unhappy Respondents by Personal Income (2008 Survey)**

Personal Income	Unhappy Respondents	All Reporting Respondents	% of Unhappy Respondents
Below \$9999	33	363	9.1%
\$10000 - \$19999	17	180	9.4%
\$20000 - \$39999	4	112	3.6%
\$40000 or above	7	55	12.7%
Total	61	710	8.6%

# Material gains can be easily procured with money; mental goods need to be cultivated

- Resources are being squandered away when people excessively consume in order to procure the mental goods they need—through a very inefficient, sometimes mutually destructive, production process.
- In an earth with resources becoming more and more scarce, a cultural and educational policy that help cultivate mental goods efficiently is highly valued!

**Table 2: “Three Happinesses” Regression (2008)**

Independent Variables: Happiness Index	Coefficient	t statistic
Constant	0.980	4.047***
Prospective Happiness	0.206	5.632***
Happiness in Process	0.219	6.184***
Retrospective Happiness	0.435	10.388***

\*\*\* signals statistical significance at 1% level.

### Prospective happiness:

- I meet each day with excitement and joy
- I do not usually worry about the future
- I expect to continue to learn more things in the rest of my life

### Happiness in process:

- I enjoy my work/housework.
- I enjoy my time with my family



# Retrospective +ve Happiness: a source of mental goods for a long time

Retrospective happiness:

- I am pleased with how I have conducted my life
- Life has been kind to me
- I have grown wiser because I am able to learn from my mistakes.

# Conclusions: Toward a Trans-cultural spiritual education

- Aimed at promoting the respect for life, nurturing Love, inspiring Wisdom/Insight, cultivating Fortitude, and promoting an active, passionate, Engaged Life.
- The world's great religions all emerge in different cultural contexts and carry different theologies, but the substance of spiritual life is the same across humanity.
- A starting point is a universal Charter for Spiritual Education that enshrines the values of religious tolerance, respect for life, and the need to cultivate wisdom regardless of religious or cultural differences.

- There are core values consistent with the basic tenets of spirituality that are not mystical and transcend cultures and religious labels, which the world has to recognize and to defend.
- Happiness can be learned. Spiritual Education is LIFE education and will allow each of us to press our Happiness Button regardless of set points.

